DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 130 373 CS 501 546

AUTHOR	Hunsinger, Paul
TITLE	The Educational Uses of Poetry Therapy.
PUB DATE	76
NOTE	23p.; Not available in hard copy due to marginal legibility of original document
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.83 Plus Postage. HC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS	*Bibliotherapy; Classroom Participation; *Communication (Thought Transfer); *Educational Methods; Group Experience; Higher Education; *Poetry; Secondary Education; Self Expression

ABSTRACT

Poetry therapy used in the classroom becomes poetry growth experiences which enable participants to use poetry and group communication as means of exploring their personal feelings and attitudes. This document includes a paper which discusses poetry growth experiences and applies information on medical uses of poetry therapy to classroom situations; poetry therapy workshop material, with guidelines for participant/facilitators; a brief bibliography; and seven sheets of sample poems. (JM)

****
* Documents acquired by ERIC include many informal unpublished *
* materials not available from other sources. ERIC makes every effort *
* to obtain the best copy available. Nevertheless, items of marginal *
* reproducibility are often encountered and this affects the quality *
* of the microfiche and hardcopy reproductions ERIC makes available *
* via the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). EDRS is not *
* responsible for the quality of the original document. Reproductions *
* supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made from the original. *
****

ED130373

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

THE EDUCATIONAL USES OF POETRY THERAPY

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL BY MICROFICHE ONLY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Paul Hunsinger

TO ERIC AND ORGANIZATIONS OPERATING UNDER AGREEMENTS WITH THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION. FURTHER REPRODUCTION OUTSIDE THE ERIC SYSTEM REQUIRES PERMISSION OF THE COPYRIGHT OWNER."

Dr. Paul Hunsinger
Speech Communication Department
University of Denver

BEST AVAILABLE COPY

CS 501 546

We welcome you to the Poetry Therapy Workshop. We ask you to read over the following prospectus before the sessions begin. We will engage in a type of Poetry Therapy or Growth Workshop, hoping that the experience will clarify some questions you may have. The academic questions and research will be dealt with after we have shared the workshop experience.

The following summary statement in Molly Harrower's article "The Therapy of Poetry" provides an orientation. She wrote:

> Poetry therapy, it would seem, is here to stay. It is certainly not a panacea for all psychic ills...rather it is one of many ways in which insight can be reached and inner growth achieved. Poetry therapy is a new comer, but long before there were therapists there were poets, and from time immemorial man has struggled to cope with his inevitable inner turmoil. One way of coping has been the ballad, the song, the poem. Once crystalized into words, the all engulfing feelings become manageable and once challenged into explicitness the burden of the incommunicable becomes less heavy. The very act of creating is a self sustaining experience.

Poetry therapy, as we will be doing it in this workshop, is <u>intrapersonal</u> communication in which poetry is used as a methodology for <u>interpersonal</u> communication. It is an opening of self to poetry and poetry to self.

We assume some common agreement about the terms poetry and therapy. In poetry we have another tool for use in therapeutic and growth situations. A brief review of the nature of poetry and therapy may provide a broader base for the initial assumptions we are working on in this workshop.

Poetry, according to Freud, is a legitimatize play with words in which rules are only guidelines for the playing. In reading poetry we find words for what we cannot say as well ourselves and we shared these borrowed expressions of what we think and feel with others. Often, when we do not have the words ourselves so we draw upon the words of others and for the time being make them our own. Poetry is not life, but it is a linear representation of the random sample we call the world. Poetry is a "deliberate prism of words" in which we catch

reflections of life. Poetry, like life, is ambiguous, and opens for us a wide variety of interpretations.

Therapy is what happens in the "therapee" more often than what is done by the therapist, especially in a group setting. When we need therapy and growth we often get what we seek from a wide variety of sources. We do not have to be sick to get better. Growth is a continual process. Good communication is facilitative, and we, in a healthy group, usually become participant/facilitators. We assume that we are going to be a "healthy group" and that our interest is in individual and group growth more than in in-depth therapy.

Dean Barnlund in Communication: Survey and Studies stated "Despite many terminological and conceptual differences there is common agreement that therapy is essentially an interpersonal and communicative process." (p. 613) Our interest is in communication, oral interpretation and group and individual growth. Whitaker (et. al) in Psychotherapy Through Group Process stressed the idea that the focal point of group interaction is therapeutic and Fritz Perls in Gestalt Therapy Verbatim mentioned the idea that therapy is not verbal, but in the sound of the words spoken and that what triggers off talk is on the edge of therapy.

Poetry therapy, in the broadest sense of the term, is what we do whenever we use poetry as a tool for exploration of self in inter- and intrapersonal communication, group communication and oral interpretation. It is not a "school" but a "tool" for self exploration and growth in group situations.

David Swanger in The Poem as Process stated: "Poetry is not a 'thing.' It is a host of supportive activities; making poems, developing a viable poetic, and responding to poetry. To these let us add a fourth activity, the sharing of poetry in all its dimensions." This sharing of our responses to poetry in a group growth situation is our primary objective in this workshop.

The term "Poetry Therapy" can be both attractive and frightening to people in Speech Communication. Attractive in the sense that in interpersonal communication there is a natural concern with therapy and "poetry" coupled with "therapy" sounds like an interesting way of approaching group communication. The term can also be frightening to those who have had bad experiences with sensitivity training and other methodologies.

People who identify themselves as being in interpersonal communication seem to have more interest in "poetry therapy" than those in oral interpretation. Perhaps this is due to the traditional approach to oral interpretation as a literary and presentational type of study.

Since the major concern in this paper is the educational uses of poetry therapy, the term "poetry therapy" should be changed to "poetry growth experiences in the classroom setting." The intent of the paper is to draw from what has been done in the medical model of poetry therapy in more clinical settings and make appropriate use of this information for the classroom teacher.

A poetry growth experience is a means whereby people in a small group can explore their personal interests and needs through the use of poetry as an affective tool. It is a method of blending intra and interpersonal communication with oral interpretation.

In pursuing our educational interests in poetry growth experiences, whether we are primarily in interpersonal communication or oral interpretation, we may discover that we have already been doing it. Like Monsieur Jordon in Moliere's "La Bourgeois Gentlemen," who when he asked the difference between poetry and prose was amazed to discover he had been speaking prose all his life, we may marvel at the fact that we have already been doing poetry growth experiences without knowing it.

One most important aspect of therapy in groupgrowth activities in the class-

room situation is that of relaxation. As teachers we are often unaware of the pressures faced by our students in class after class. The poetry growth experience should be relaxing, and this in itself is therapeutic. No one should ever be forced into a poetry growth session and if there are those who choose not to participate their wishes should be respected and they should not be placed in an embarrassing position.

Whenever a class explores their feelings about a poem in depth, working on the affective rather than the cognitive level, it is on the verge of a poetry growth experience. This happens in oral interpretation classes quite often. When a poem triggers off personal feelings that cause a person to get into an in-depth discussion of their thoughts and feelings, this is a move into group growth experiences.

In the educational model of communication, as compared to the medical model, the emphasis is on growth rather than on treatment. It is assumed that the growth is positive rather than negative and that as an individual's self concept improves his or her ability to relate to others will also improve.

For information on the medical model and the procedures used in Poetry Therapy you can turn to the books and articles listed in the bibliography. What is presented here is based on participation, research information and the experience of facilitating groups in classroom situations and in workshops. There is no one way to do it. The suggestions that follow are only personal observations based on some experience and are offered as such.

General Procedures for Classroom Use:

The classroom situation is the major limitation on any therapeutic activity. What can be done in a meager fifty minute session of a class or even in a more extended period? Not much, perhaps, but learning takes place not only in the classroom, but in the intervening time. Therefore, in considering the possibility of using the techniques of poetry therapy in a classroom situation it should be

viewed as a series of class periods rather than a one session approach.

The other limitation on the classroom use of poetry growth experiences is the number of people. Small groups of people are best since the larger the group the less participation by each. It is often possible to form small groups and provide people who have had some experience (often from previous classes) as facilitators. Sometimes, with healthy and experienced people, it is possible for groups to function without a designated facilitator.

The group should be "self contained" and no outsiders should be permitted, even as observers. What is done in the group is the group's property and groups should not discuss what went on in their group with anyone who is not a part of the group.

In planning an intrcduction to poetry growth experiences as a part of a course there should be at least three or more periods available. My experience has been that the first session is usually a getting acquainted period, a hesitant opening up of individuals, an awareness of what may be triggered off by poems. The second session, as I have observed classes, tends to be the real beginning for the participants since whatever fears or reservations they have brought into the first session seem to dissipate and the personal threat level is reduced. The third session usually seems to be the most valuable and participants express themselves openly and eagerly. This may not be the best time to stop, when the interest is high, but sometimes it is necessary to move on to other aspects of the course and if the experience has been valuable the interest will continue.

The procedure for introductory sessions that I have found best is to provide some "starter poems" and get responses by asking people which poems interst them the most. The participants are asked to read the poems that they respond to for the group. This is followed by questions designed to bring out how the poems make them feel. Usually this leads into a discussion of feelings others have that are

triggered off by the poetry. I avoid discussion of the poems as literature. If a person attempts to discuss the literary rather than the affective aspects I usually move on to some one else. Toward the end of the class period, about ten minutes is needed for a "debriefing" if the session has gotten into any depth.

Methodologies:

The teacher is a facilitator in a poetry growth session, not an instructor. This means that there should be no lecture or discussion of the poetry by the teacher. The procedure is primarily questioning and encouraging questions from others. While the facilitator may provide "starter poems" participants should also bring in poems. It is also a good idea to have available anthologies that can be used by the group as the session develops.

The facilitators usually do not read the poems aloud, but call on others to read. Facilitation is done by studying the nonverbal as well as the oral communication in the group and directing questions accordingly. Questions such as "Do you disagree with what....has been saying?" or "Do you have similar feelings...?" or "Do you understand what....is saying?" are most facilitating. The facilitator should not, except on rare occasions, enter into the discussion with personal opinions or feelings.

There is one rather unique psychological safeguard in poetry growth sessions. When someone gets into an area that is becoming uncomfortable, they often shift from talking about personal feelings to the poem itself. This may indicate that they are not interested in exploring personal feeling further and the facilitator should pick up on cues of this type and move on to another poem or to someone else.

The poems become excuses for the group to talk about what they want to talk about; objective reference points for subjective thoughts and feelings. Therefore, it is quite difficult to know in advance which poems individuals will latch onto and use.since often it is only a phrase or some image that triggers

off the reactions.

In the classroom situation the poetry that seems to work best is usually short, nondidactic, and for the most part unfamiliar to the participants. The names of the poets are usually not listed in "starter poems' to discourage literary analysis and to keep the discussions on the affective level. (Quite often when the name of the poet is known there is a tendency to discuss that author's poetry in general rather than the specific poem.) The "starter poems" are usually supplied by the facilitators, but the participants are urged to bring in original and favorite poems and to write their own poetry as the sessions progress. The technique of asking for reactions to the experience in the class, expressed in the poetry, often provides a good starting point for the following session.

Facilitation is a group activity as well as the special task of the designated facilitator. When participants understand the facilitator's role in general they tend to move into that role and the group becomes self-directed. Facilitators encourage the asking of questions, establishing supportive systems and honest expression of feelings. Empathic responses may be not only to poems but to people. Bonding can be expressed at various levels. A person may empathize but not to the depth of feeling expressed by another. "I feel that way myself, but not as deeply" is a statement of understanding and support.

Group communication problems, such as one person talking too much or silent members, can often be handled by the participants as well as designated facilitators. The atmosphere in the session would be open and friendly. The concerns of each are the concerns of all in poetry growth experiences.

Moralizing and judgmental statements should be discouraged in growth groups of this type. However, judgmental evaluation of a poem often opens the way for someone to ask questions that go beyond what is "in the poem." For this reason the poems selected as starters should be "not so good that they can't be discussed" and

"not so poorly written that there is nothing to discuss."

Here are some exercises for group facilitation:

The technique of using a "foldover sheet" to encourage people to express their immediate feelings by writing a line based on some statement such as "Right now I feel...." then folding it over so that what they have written is not seen by others and pass it on. After each person has had a chance to write their feelings or thoughts on the sheet it is read. (Quite often this becomes a group poem.) Other variations of this is to ask people to write their thoughts and feelings about what seems to be the core of the group's interest, such as feelings about death, loneliness, fears, etc. If the atmosphere is right the fold over technique can be used as a method of summarizing feelings about every person in the group. At the top of the sheet is the person's name. Each person writes a line about how they feel about that person. This is a good method for reaching closure at the end of poetry growth sessions.

Closure is a necessary part of group growth experiences and yet closure should not be forced. In some instances closure comes naturally and the group senses when it is time to move toward termination.

Evaluation:

The purpose of poetry growth experiences, generally stated, should be to enable participants to use poetry and group communication as a means of exploring their personal feelings and attitudes. A secondary purpose, more specifically stated in academic terminology, should be to make participants more aware of the affective levels of poetry. In other words, if a pre and post test were to be employed the initial questions should be centered on the appreciation of poetry and the level of willingness to disclose aspects of self and then checked on the post test.

Perhaps the best evaluation of poetry growth experiences cannot be done through testing As teachers of Oral Interpretation we can get to know our students better when we provide the means by which they can express their thoughts and feelings about literature in open discussion rather than by just listening to them do oral-readings. This is where poetry growth experiences add to courses in oral interpretation. As teachers of interpersonal communication we can get deeper into the feelings of students when we provide them with safe objective referents that canb be found in poetry.

Perhaps the best summary of the value of poetry growth experience in the classroom situation can be found somewnere in the "foldover" from a recent class. Each person tried to summarize their feelings by adding a line to a sheet titled, "Right now I feel..."

...I am more open thar I have ever been.

...I am hesitant to admit it but I really do love everybody in this room and I wish we could go on forever.

...I am willing, at last, to accept the love others have shown me in this class.

...I am not afraid to be me and to let others be who they are.

...as if this course was oworth the high tuition we have to pay here at DU.

...GOOD. MAN, I REALLY FEEL GOOD ABOUT MY SELF.

...There are no adequate words to express my feelings right now but someday I will be able to write a poem that will express it all.

...I am no longer afraid of poetry

of others and

of being me.

A PARTIAL BIBLIOGRAPHY OF POETRY THERAPY MATERIALS

BOOKS AND THESES:

Harrower, Molly. The Therapy of Poetry. Springfield, Illinois: Charles C. Thomas. 1972.
The author, both a psychologist and poet, describes her own poetic development based on the belief that poetry is normal and that it is one of the natural devices with which to cope with the inevitable crises of life.

Leedy, Jack J., Ed. Poetry the Healer. Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Co., 1973.
A second collection of materials gathered by Dr. Leedy from therapists and literature specialists which explore valuable psychological aspects of poetry therapy.

Leedy, Jack J., Ed. Poetry Therapy. Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Co., 1969.
A basic and varied collection of significant essays by specialists on several aspects of poetry as a therapy.

Lessner, Johanna Wiener. Melpomene and Psyche: The Synergy of Literature and Psychology. Doctoral Dissertation, Ann Arbor: Dissertation Abstracts International, Univ. M-Films, No. 73-16758. HC $10.00 Mf $4.00 315 p.
The use of literature in combination with humanistic psychology in a college curriculum as a means to promote growth and self-actualization among students.

ARTICLES AND PAMPHLETS:

Buck, Lucien A. and Aaron Kramer. "Poetry as a Means of Group Facilitation," Journal of Humanistic Psychology, Vol. 14, No. 1, Winter, 1974, p. 57-71.
Delineates a group experience using poetry as a means of increasing directness of expression which heightens the groups' intimacy and cohesion.

Chase, Janet. "Poetry Therapy. Human Behavior, August 1973, p. 25.
Presents a current overview of poetry therapy.

Erickson, C.R. et. al. "Poetry as a Subtle Therapy," Hospital Community Psychiatry, XXIII (Feb, 1972), p. 56-57.
The Use of poetry therapy in a state mental hospital to create a milieu in which the patient feels comfortable to talk about how he feels.

Lawler, Justus George. "Poetry Therapy?" Psychiatry, XXXV (August 1972), 227-237.
An analytical discussion of poetry therapy. When poetry is used as a way of speaking of the self, the author feels it is valuable and cites R.D. Laing. Lawler questions the effectiveness of approaching poetry as a therapy without this point-of-view.

Lerner, Arthur. "Poetry Therapy," American Journal of Nursing, LXXIII (August 1973), pp. 1336-1338.
Discusses how poetry therapy can be used to make a person aware of his inner feelings at a conscious level including a discussion of the process and techniques giving examples of creative writing from members of a poetry therapy group.

Lerner, Arthur. "Poetry Therapy: A Healing Art." The Study of English (Se Eigo Kenkyu), January 1, 1974, pp. 22-27.
Poetry therapy as a vehicle to move the "therapy" along, a poem can act as a non-threatening agent of communication. Includes accounts of members of a poetry therapy and examples of their poetry.

Lerner, Arthur. "Poetry Therapy and a Freedom to Move in any Direction." Showcase/Chicago Sun-Times, July 16, 1972, p. 2.
Describes the author's experiences as a poetry therapist and discusses how poetry therapy can create group cohesiveness and how it can cause a person to take a serious look at this own feelings and deal with them.

Lerner, Arthur. "Poetry Therapy: From Sad to Verse." PTA Magazine, March 1973, pp. 30-32, 36-37.
Identifies ways poetry therapy can be used as a means of communication in therapy sessions with adolescents and as a way to improve communications between parents and children. Includes examples of poems written by adolescents exposed to poetry therapy.

Tedford, W.H. and Carolyn Sue Synnott. "Use of the Semantic Differential With Poetic Forms." Psychological Record, 22(30):369-373, 1972.
Analyzes the moods and feelings evoked by the four basic types of poetic feet and its implications for selection of poems used in poetry therapy and for interpretations of poems written by patients.

Appendix

A certain mystique has already grown up about Poetry Therapy. It has been the purpose of this workshop to provide opportunities for participants to gain insights on the possible educational uses of poetry in interpersonal communication and oral interpretation by being in abbreviated poetry growth experience sessions. Poetry is not a pill that can cure psychic ills. Poems can be used as probes to explore feelings and attitudes when people are willing to open themselves to poetry and to open poetry to themselves. "Poetry therapy" to quote Arthur Lerner, "is not a school, but a tool" and I hope this experience has provided you with a useable set of tools.

It may be that much of what is included in the paper on "The Educational Uses of Poetry Therapy" will have already been discussed in the closing sessions. There is, of course, much more than could be added, but it is my hope that the workshop has opened the way for you to proceed on your own. I would be interested in what you discover in working with your students and would appreciate hearing from you.

Paul Hunsinger
Speech Communication Department
University of Denver
Denver, Colorado 80208

Suggestions for Participation/Facilitators

Good participation in a group is facilitative in nature. While there will be designated facilitators for your group, each person may be in the role of participant/facilitator as the group process evolves. The following suggestions are designed as guidelines:

1. A collection of poems that might help you start the process has been made available. You may have other poems in mind that you would like to share. (There will be some anthologies available if you wish to find certain poems.) READ OVER THE POEMS AND FEEL FREE TO SHARE YOUR REACTIONS WITH YOUR GROUP. We are not interested in literary analysis. (For this reason the names of the poets have been eliminated.) But we are interested in what the poems seem to do in, to, for and with you.

2. Share your feelings about the poems by reading them aloud. Listen to the voice of the poem as well as the voices of the readers and respond to the feelings and ideas in both. We are interested in affective responses more than cognitive analysis. "What you seem to be saying to me..." is of equal importance with, "What the poems seem to be saying..."

3. As a participant/facilitator, encourage lateral transference (an identification with others based on what is stimulated by the poem) and vertical bonding (empathic responses to different levels of feeling) as the group develops. Share with others your honest feelings and identify with their feelings as the session develops.

4. The isoprinciple is an assumption that what you feel is in the poem or that the poem expresses your feeling. Your oral reading is your interpretation of the poem, not the poem itself. There will probably be as many interpretations as there are people in the group. In poetry therapy the intention implicit in the literary object is not as important as the intentions of the people responding to the poetry.

5. Relax. Relaxation is therapeutic in itself. As Abbe put it in Poetry, The Great Therapy, "The best poetry has been written from subconscious sources under

compulsion to relieve inner tensions." Poetry may relax us by giving us a safe objective referent for expressing subjective feelings, so we can not only empathize, but also use the poem for discussion of our inmost feelings and attitudes. Poetry thus becomes a simple focal point for discussing more complex subjective thoughts and feelings.

6. Confirmation is achieved by asking others how they feel. When you do not really know what a person means or feels, just gently ask them. The "meaning" or feeling of the poem is in the words on the page ("and what's in between the words" as Cummings put it). The meaning and feeling engendered by the poem is in people and can be brought out by questions rightly timed and phrased.

7. Feel free to be creative and develop poems as you enter into the experience. (Some creative methodologies will be included in the workshop, but do your own poetic things.) Share your creative efforts with others in your group.

8. Your group will be a self contained unit and what is shared by the group is the private property of the group. (No outsiders or observers will be permitted.) Whatever process problems your group may have should be handled by the members of the group. Have faith in the people in your group and sufficient patience for the group process to work. At the end of the workshop, during the debriefing sessions, you may (if you wish) share your experiences with the other groups.

The workshop will conclude with a seminar type discussion of the uses of poetry therapy and growth in the academic situation. Rather than stopping the workshop sessions to talk about techniques we will save these observations till the close.

Enjoy.

Paul Hunsinger
and staff
University of Denver

A

Each found himself new
at Beginnings --
always at beginnings
breaking the hard ground,
the hard ground holding the word,
always
rigid with it.

B

The animal I wanted
couldn't get into the world...
I can hear it crying
When I sit like this away from life.

C

Silence enters the room
creeping on the floor,
touching the walls
and scurrying
about the chairs,

then stops,
sinister
as a tiger -
waiting
for words

D

After I had worked all day at what I earn my living
I was tired. Now my own work has lost another day
I thought, but I began slowly,
and slowly my strength came back to me
Surely, the tide comes in twice a day.

E

When I open the refrigerator door
of my mind
a little light goes on
and I see
cold delicacies
and
leftovers

When I open the enameled oven door
of my heart,
a little light goes on
and I see
warm memories
and
no leftovers.

F

So be it, I am
a wholeness I'll never know.
Maybe that's the best.

G

Let us keep the fire
and the wheel
and a few conveniences
and return language
to the gods.
Words do not warm us,
Verbs do not carry us.
Nouns trap us
and hold us in.

H

Move closer to me,
I want to be near you
today.
But I know if you
move nearer to me -
I will move away.

A

One broken dream
Is not the end of dreaming
One shattered hope
does not end it all.

Beyond the storm and
tempest
stars still are gleaming.

Build your castles;
though your castles fall.

B

Why should the world be overwise,
In counting all our tears and sighs?
Nay, let them only see us, while
we wear the same mask.

C

The cup was dismayed
to find that with
dipping it took
no more from the river
than from the brook

D

Everything is a little of the darkness
Even the sun.

E

Set out from any point.
They are all alike.
They all lead to a point of departure.

F

What can I say?
Is it better to have loved and lost
Than to put linoleum ; in your livingrooms?

G

We're all falling
we never learn about it
till we land.

Paul might fall a different way
but who's to say which way ;is better
till they've been there
and come back safe.

H

For you there is no song...
only the shaking
Of the voice that meant to sing; the sound
of the strong
Voice breaking.

I

I will be the gladdest thing
Under the sun!
I will touch a hundred flowers
And not pick one.

A

The crowd at the ball game
is moved uniformly
by a spirit of uselessness
which delights them--

B

If you had listened hard enough
you might have heard
what I meant to say.

C

Reveal to me no more
Than what I know of you--your bright disguises.

D

That's how reality begins,
shadows made something real
or reality turned back into a shadow.
I need the sureness of the shadow world again
To make me whole.

E

I

Forget
Me quickly as a laughing picture
sketched
On water, I shall never know regret
Knowing no magic ever can set free
That part of you that is a part of me.

F

Build a fence around me
the moment that you see me running.
I'm so elusive sometimes
I miss the things worth stopping for.

G

The crow flew so fast
That he left his lonely caw
Behind in the fields

H

We all hate home
And having to be there:
I detest my room,
Its specially chosen junk,
The good books, the good bed,
And my life, in perfect order

I

Empty is
the sky before the sun wakes up in the morning
The eyes of animals in cages.
The faces of women mourning
when everything has been taken
from them.
Me?
Don't ask me about empty.

A

I went down to the Sea
Bearing a garland of words
To honor the Sea and the Night
The Wind and the Stars
And forgot them in my passion for sea shells.

B

I shall never know myself
enought to know what things I half believe
And, half believing, only half deny.

C

I have been sitting quietly
with your things scattered
around me

C

I have been sitting quietly
with your things scattered around me:
your love for them is
evident
in their disorder.

D

Alas! for all the pretty women who marry dull men,
Go into the suburbs and never come out again,
Who lose their pretty faces and dim their pretty eyes,
Because no one has the skill or courage to organize.

E

I don't want to be
what you want me to be
But I want to be
what I want to be
but for me to be
I would have to be
what I am afraid to be.

F

I am with the hunters
Hungry and shrewd
and I am with the hunted
quick and soft and nude

G

I think myself ugly
& go to the mirror, smiling,
at the inaccuracy.

H

...I shall die
without books
With another human hand
in my own.

A

open the pages of my mind
chances for something there
appealing to your kind
awaiting, untouched and bare

B

Soon you begin to realize that
"I don't want to"
Is the word's greatest reason

C

alone I've wandered,
with each truth
i acknowledge
i take a step
toward self-fealization

D

Lately, I have become accustomed to the way
The ground opens up and envelopes me
Each time I go out to walk the dog

E

You have nothing to fear from the poet -
but the truth

F

Take a chance on me.
I haven't any name
but what you'll give me when you leave.

G

Hell (by most humble me which shall increase)
open thy fire! for I have had some bliss
of one small lady upon earth above;
to whom I cry, remembering her face,
I have never loved you dear as now I love

H

How tall we are
We've learned so much
Everything it seems,
but how to stay in touch.

I

Got up this morning
Feeling good & black
Thinking black thoughts
Did black things
Played all my black records
And minded my own black business
Put on my best black clothes
Walked out my black door
And, Lord have mercy: white snow!

J

We come into the world along.
We go away the same.
We're meant to spend the interlude between
in closeness
Or so we tell ourselves.

A

When you take your pill
It's like a mine disaster.
I think of all the people
lost inside of you.

B

Your door is shut against my tightened face,
And I am sharp as steel with discontent;
But I possess the courage and the grace
to bear my anger proudly and unbent.

C

I'd like to be a poem, a
sonnet, a lyric,
a ballad
or an epic verse.
But, me? I am blank verse.

D

The doors in my house
Are used every day
For closing rooms
Ana locking children away.

E

Have you every felt like nobody?
Just a tiny speck of air.
When everyone's around you,
And you are just not there.

F.

I will write songs against you,
enemies of my people; I will pelt you
with the winged seeds of the dandelion;
I shall marshall against you
the fireflies of the dusk.

G

I know what I have given you.
I do not know what you have received.

Here are partial poems for you to finish if the poem strikes your fancy. Do not worry about the rhyme or structure of the poems as poetry, just freely add your own thoughts and feelings.

A

Let me be
utterly along.
Let me close my eyes
tight and shut out
light that I.....

B

Right now, here in
this place
I feel.....

C

Seeing you, suddenly
I had the.....

D

There is as much of me
in.....

E

I didn't have a
chance to say.....

F

As a child I thought
that.....

G

When you said.....

I felt...